



**Director of
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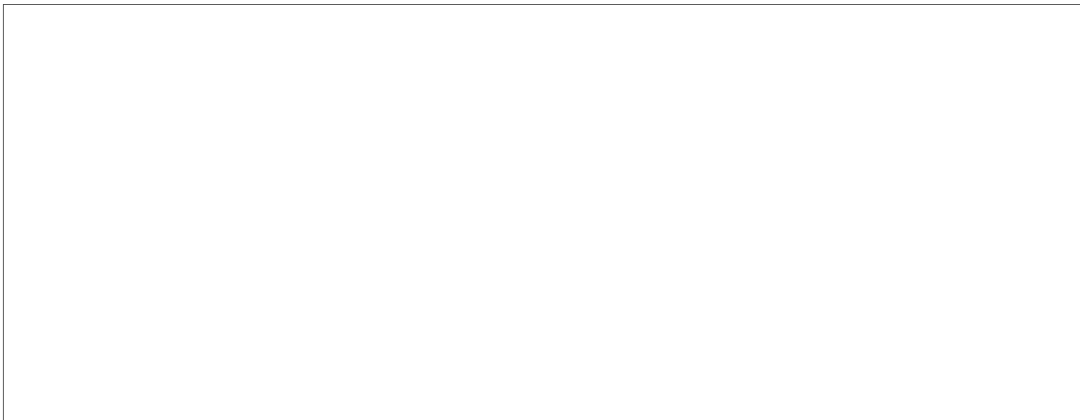
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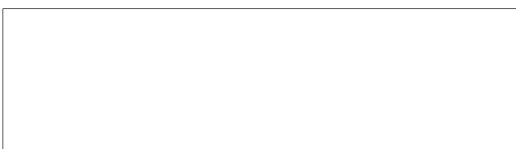
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CHAD: Rebels Repulse Government Attack

The forces of insurgent leader Habre turned back a government offensive in central Chad early this week. The guerrillas now are holding their position, while the OAU--with strong French diplomatic support--continues to urge President Goukouni to negotiate with Habre. Goukouni, however, is still hoping for substantial foreign military aid to sustain his shaky coalition regime.

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1/2 Comment: Habre may seek a military solution if Goukouni further delays negotiations in order to mount another offensive. Meanwhile, Goukouni appears increasingly vulnerable to a coup either from those in the government who want him to negotiate or those who have much to lose if he does. The OAU and France seem unable to devise an early solution, and OAU peacekeeping troops are likely to withdraw from Chad by the end of June unless prospects for a settlement improve.

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SPECIAL ANALYSES

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SYRIA: Domestic Unrest and Foreign Policy

The uprising in the northern city of Hamah last month intensified the sense of isolation of the minority Alawite regime in Damascus and has led it to blame its external enemies for the fighting. President Assad's repression of the Sunni Muslim rebels has further estranged the other Arab states, virtually all of which are led by Sunnis.

Syria's primary foreign policy goal is to have a pivotal role in Middle Eastern affairs. Assad has tried to get the other Arabs to support Syria as the key confrontation state and to put Syrian interests ahead of other regional concerns. His tough policies toward his foreign and domestic critics, however, have often alienated the Arabs and caused them to view Syria as a maverick.

After Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights in December, Assad launched a series of diplomatic initiatives to capitalize on the sympathy for Syria resulting from what the Arab world regarded as a major affront. His moves included a personal visit to Saudi Arabia and the convening of a special conference of Arab foreign ministers in Tunis. In addition, Foreign Minister Khaddam made a trip to Moscow.

Difficulties With Arab Neighbors

The Syrians evidently used these contacts to extract expressions of support and at the same time may have soothed the irritation caused by Assad's boycott of the Arab summit in Morocco last fall. The fence-mending campaign was subsequently undercut, however, by Syria's unwillingness to modify its opposition to the Fahd peace plan, by its support of Iran in its war with Iraq, and by its determination to play a lone hand in Lebanon.

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Following the fighting in Hamah, Syria appears to be back where it was before the annexation of the Golan-- and it may be even more isolated. The Saudis in particular were dismayed by the severity of the crackdown on the dissident Sunnis. In Kuwait, the National Assembly voted against additional funds for the Syrian-manned Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon. [REDACTED]

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Relations With Tehran

Syria's numerous problems with its fellow Arabs are driving the Assad regime toward closer relations with Iran. Foreign Minister Khaddam's recent visit to Tehran reportedly was aimed at strengthening bilateral ties. Assad apparently believes that in the short term he has little to lose by following such a course and that he may get cheaper oil from Iran as well as a mutual defense pact against Iraq. [REDACTED]

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At this point, Assad's best hope for improving relations with other Arab states is to make a gesture of support for the Fahd plan. Nonetheless, he probably will not make any significant concessions soon. [REDACTED]

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